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AUTHORITY

OAG, D/A LTR, 29 APR 1980

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

IN REPLY REFER TO

AGDA (M) (25 Aug 69) FOR OT UT 692292

9 September 1969


SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 184th
Ordnance Battalion, Period Ending 30 April 1969

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Subject report is forwarded for review and evaluation in accordance with paragraph 5b, AR 525-15. Evaluations and corrective actions should be reported to ACSFOR OT UT, Operational Reports Branch, within 90 days of receipt of covering letter.
2. Information contained in this report is provided to insure appropriate benefits in the future from lessons learned during current operations and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

1 Incl
as


ROBERT E. LYNCH
Colonel, AGC
Acting The Adjutant General

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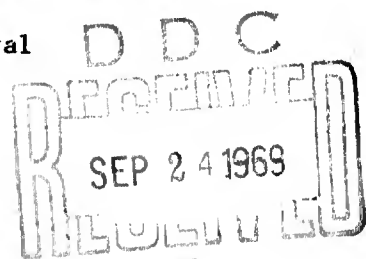
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39

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 184TH ORDNANCE BATTALION (AMMO)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96226

AVCA QN-OD-CO

14 May 1969

SUBJECT: Operational Report of the 184th Ordnance Battalion (Ammo)
for Period Ending 30 April 1969 RCS CSFOR-65 (R-1)

THRU: Commanding General, US Army Support Command, Qui Nhon, ATTN:
AVCA QN-GO-H, APO 96238

Commanding General, 1st Logistical Command, ATTN: AVCA-GO-O,
APO 96384

Commanding General, United States Army, Vietnam, ATTN: AVHGC-DST,
APO 96375

Commander-In-Chief, United States Army Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-OT,
APO 96558

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the
Army, Washington, D.C. 20310

1. Section 1, Operations: Significant Activities.

a. During the reporting period, the 184th Ordnance Battalion (Ammunition) (Direct Support/General Support) continued to perform its mission as a conventional ammunition battalion. The battalion has been engaged in combat service support operations during the entire 89 day reporting period.

b. During the reporting period the battalion's assets were redistributed and altered as follows:

(1) On 14 February 1969 the 205th Ordnance Platoon was transferred from the 184th Ordnance Battalion to the 3rd Ordnance Battalion in US Army Support Command, Saigon. The unit was transferred with an assigned strength of one warrant officer and sixty six enlisted men.

(2) The mission of the 205th Ordnance Platoon, which was operating Ammunition Supply Point (ASP) #340 at An Khe, was taken over by the 1st Magazine Platoon of the 630th Ordnance Company (Ammo).

(3) Simultaneous with the transfer of the 205th was the return of 1st Magazine Platoon, 661st Ordnance Company from Long Binh, RVN where it was attached to the 3rd Ordnance Battalion. The platoon was returned to its parent unit in Qui Nhon.

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(4) The double transfer of the elements indicated in paragraph 1b (1) and 1b (2) above did not result in physical movement of all of the troops assigned to the two units. The 205th personnel operating the ASP at An Khe were redesignated 1st Magazine Platoon, 630th Ordnance Company and remained at An Khe. Some forty personnel of the 1st Magazine Platoon, 661st Ordnance Company remained at Long Binh and were reassigned to the 205th Ordnance Platoon. An additional twenty five personnel were assigned to the 205th from battalion assets and physically transferred to Long Binh while some twenty personnel actually returned to Qui Nhon from Long Binh as the 1st Magazine Platoon, 661st Ordnance Company.

(5) In April 1969 the mission of operating the Ammunition Supply Point at Bong Son (Landing Zone English) was transferred from the 661st Ordnance Company to the 820th Ordnance Company. At the same time the personnel operating the ASP were reassigned to the 820th Ordnance Company.

(6) On 23 April 1969, the US Army Support Command, Qui Nhon Guard Command (Provisional) was redesignated USASUPCOM, QN Security Guard Company (Provisional) and reassigned from 184th Ordnance Battalion to HHD, USASUPCOM, QN. The unit retains the same mission of providing security for the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot and ASP #340 at An Khe and is attached to the 184th Ordnance Battalion for all purposes. The unit was reorganized under a new concept. Seven officers and eighty five enlisted men are assigned as cadre and two hundred seventy eight enlisted men are attached for thirty days with the option of extending an additional thirty days. These "filler" personnel are new "in country" replacements of varied MOS who are given two days of intensified training and orientation to prepare them for the thirty days of security duty. The total unit strength was increased from five officers and three hundred ten enlisted to seven officers and three hundred sixty three enlisted. The increased strength is necessary because of increased security requirements deemed essential due to several attacks on ammunition facilities during the post winter-spring offensive in RVN including three attacks on the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot. (See para 1h)

c. During the reporting period the following changes of command took place:

(1) CPT William J. Ahlum assumed command of the 630th Ordnance Company on 20 March 1969.*

(2) CPT Stephen J. Demora Jr. assumed command of HHC, 184th Ordnance Battalion on 21 March 1969.

(3) CPT William R. Holmes assumed command of the 188th Ordnance Company on 22 March 1969.

(4) CPT Phillip A. Hennen assumed command of the 630th Ordnance Company on 24 March 1969.

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Operational Report for Period Ending 30 April 1969 RCS CSFOR-65 (R-1)

(5) CPT Roscoe B. Wade assumed command of USASUPCOM, QN Guard Command (Provisional) on 24 March 1969.

(6) CPT John C. McArdle Jr. assumed command of the 820th Ordnance Company on 25 April 1969.

(7) 1LT George E. Bright assumed command of the 661st Ordnance Company on 25 April 1969.

* CPT William J. Ahlum was killed in an attack on the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot on 23 March 1969.

d. During the reporting period elements of the battalion completed the following inspections from higher headquarters successfully:

(1) Command Maintenance Management Inspection by 1st Logistical Command: 630th Ordnance Company, 661st Ordnance Company and 820th Ordnance Company.

(2) Annual General Inspection: 504th Ordnance Detachment (Renovation).

e. Mission:

(1) The battalion's primary mission is to provide general support ammunition service to all ASPs in the Qui Nhon Support Command and direct support ammunition service to local units in Qui Nhon, An Khe, Pleiku, and Tuy Hoa.

(2) Additional missions of the battalion are the operation of the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot and Brass Yard Annex, Ammunition Supply Point 340 at An Khe, Ammunition Supply Point 341 at Pleiku, the Tuy Hoa Ammunition Supply Point and the Ammunition Supply Point at the LZ Mary Lou FSE. The battalion provides personnel and equipment to operate the Ammunition Supply Point at LZ English.

f. Mission Activities:

(1) The stockage objective of ASP #340 at An Khe was increased from 897 short tons (S/T) to 2453 short tons (S/T) during the reporting period in order to:

(a) Provide a backup for ASP #341 in Pleiku and to

(b) Provide for more decentralized storage in the Qui Nhon Support Command area.

(2) During this period, the ASP at Landing Zone Mary Lou was required to support a force consisting of nine maneuver battalions engaged in an operation near Kontum for thirty days. This ASP was operated by eleven personnel at that time and had a stockage objective of seven hundred fifteen (715) short tons and was designed to support one brigade sized force. This support was

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Operational Report for Period Ending 30 April 1969 RCS CSFOR-65 (R-1)

made possible by sending two to three resupply convoys to LZ Mary Lou daily from Pleiku and by the outstanding performance of the personnel assigned there. In one twenty four period, one non-commissioned officer and seven enlisted men with the aid of one forklift lifted 1001.9 short tons of ammunition. The rated capability of this workforce for twenty four hours is eighty five short tons.

g. Production. The following tabulated data shows the battalions' output for the reporting period on the basis of tons lifted:

(1) <u>QNABD</u>	<u>FEBRUARY</u>	<u>MARCH</u>	<u>APRIL</u>
Issues	29,280	28,836	14,057
Receipts	13,375	24,630	9,480
Rewarehousing	<u>22,516</u>	<u>19,995</u>	<u>33,819</u>
Total	65,271 S/T	68,461 S/T	57,356 S/T
<u>PLEIKU (ASP 341)</u>	<u>FEBRUARY</u>	<u>MARCH</u>	<u>APRIL</u>
Issues	6,786	8,656	5,312
Receipts	6,750	9,959	4,395
Rewarehousing	<u>4,905</u>	<u>5,781</u>	<u>5,121</u>
Total	18,441 S/T	24,396 S/T	14,828 S/T
<u>AN KHE (ASP 340)</u>	<u>FEBRUARY</u>	<u>MARCH</u>	<u>APRIL</u>
Issues	1,209	1,277	492
Receipts	1,193	2,884	346
Rewarehousing	<u>1,098</u>	<u>2,212</u>	<u>4,592</u>
Total	3,500 S/T	6,373 S/T	5,430 S/T
<u>TUY HOA</u>	<u>FEBRUARY</u>	<u>MARCH</u>	<u>APRIL</u>
Issues	1,887	1,215	883
Receipts	1,690	895	718
Rewarehousing	<u>290</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>114</u>
Total	3,867 S/T	2,173 S/T	1,715 S/T

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Operational Report for Period Ending 30 April 1969 RCS CSFOR-65 (R-1)

<u>MARY LOU</u>	<u>FEBRUARY</u>	<u>MARCH</u>	<u>APRIL</u>
Issues	2,450	5,368	1,794
Receipts	2,488	5,382	1,876
Rewarehousing	<u>215</u>	<u>565</u>	<u>605</u>
Total	5,153 S/T	11,315 S/T	4,275 S/T

<u>LZ ENGLISH</u>	<u>FEBRUARY</u>	<u>MARCH</u>	<u>APRIL</u>
Issues	1,357	1,105	1,186
Receipts	1,319	1,062	1,163
Rewarehousing	<u>241</u>	<u>261</u>	<u>286</u>
Total	2,917 S/T	2,428 S/T	2,635 S/T

<u>QNABD BRASS YARD</u>	<u>FEBRUARY</u>	<u>MARCH</u>	<u>APRIL</u>
Issues	645	816	905
Receipts	729	491	727
Rewarehousing	<u>234</u>	<u>248</u>	<u>649</u>
Total	1,608 S/T	1,555 S/T	2,281 S/T

<u>TOTALS</u>	
QNABD	191,088
PLEIKU	57,665
AN KHE	16,113
TUY HOA	7,755
LZ MARY LOU	20,743
LZ ENGLISH	7,979
BRASS YARD	<u>5,444</u>

GRAND TOTAL: 306,787 S/T

(2) Despite 5% fewer personnel and a large portion of available manpower being utilized for increased security and cleanup of the QNABD after three attacks, the battalion lifted 32% more ammunition than last reporting period.

h. Enemy Activity. During the reporting period the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot suffered three enemy sapper attacks; on 23 February, 10 March and 23 March 1969. These attacks resulted in extensive losses of ammunition and many friendly casualties. A summary of the attacks and individual after action reports are included as inclosures 2 through 5.

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Operational Report for Period Ending 30 April 1969 RCS CSFOR-65 (R-1)

2. Section 2, Lessons Learned: Commanders Observations, Evaluations and Recommendations.

a. Personnel: Critical shortage of personnel.

(1) **OBSERVATION:** Continued lack of replacements together with increased workload caused the shortage of personnel to be critical. In order to continue to perform the mission all personnel were required to work a minimum of twelve hours a day, seven days a week with no relief.

(2) **EVALUATION:** As unit strength declines to a low level, average output per man declines at an accelerated rate because unit overhead remains approximately constant since the quantity of equipment to be maintained and administrative functions remain constant. Therefore in order to maintain the same total output working hours must be increased. An undesirable product of increased working hours without relief for a long period of time is a general lowering of morale.

(3) **SOLUTION:** Of the three ordnance companies currently operating the depot, two were filled up to about 90% strength at the expense of the third. An appropriate amount of equipment was also transferred to the two larger units. The mission of operating the depot was then split between the two larger units while the reduced unit picked up the mission of operating the brass yard, repair and utilities and other essential but small scale missions. The net result was a reduction of overhead personnel therefore freeing more personnel for mission activity and lowering the workload on each individual.

(4) **RECOMMENDATION:** That when troop level is maintained at reduced strength, consideration be given to decreasing the number of separate units so that average output per man is not reduced.

b. Operations: Ammunition firefighting procedures and plans (see inclosures 3 through 5).

c. Training: Sapper Tactics.

(1) **OBSERVATION:** All three attacks upon Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot as well as many attacks on other logistical installations have been by trained sappers.

(2) **EVALUATION:** All logistical personnel must be thoroughly trained in sapper techniques, procedures and motives in order to effectively defend installations.

(3) **SOLUTION:** All personnel of the battalion have been given an extensive orientation on this subject and procedures have been set up to conduct periodic refresher training.

(4) **RECOMMENDATION:** That RVN orientation given to personnel assigned to Vietnam with logistic MOS's emphasize defense against sappers.

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Operational Report for Period Ending 30 April 1969 FCS CSFOR (R-1)

d. Intelligence: (See inclosures 2 through 5).

e. Logistics: Firefighting equipment.

(1) OBSERVATION: Conventional ammunition units are not currently authorized firefighting equipment other than conventional water trucks, bulldozers, fire extinguishers and hand tools. Water trucks are in short supply in United States Army Republic of Vietnam (this battalion has two on hand of eight authorized). This unit has three improvised water trucks on hand.

(2) EVALUATION: An ammunition depot must be provided adequate fire-fighting equipment to be located at the depot in order to immediately respond to a fire in the depot. This equipment should include fire trucks (pumpers). All authorized firefighting equipment must be made available to ammunition units operating in the field. Adequate fire fighting equipment on hand could prevent the loss of millions of dollars worth of ammunition which might well influence the course of an engagement or strategic operation.

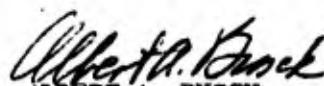
(3) RECOMMENDATION: That fire trucks and all currently authorized fire fighting equipment be made available to ammunition units in the field.

f. Organization: None.

g. Local Defense: (See inclosures 2 through 5).

3. Section 3, Headquarters, Department of the Army Survey Information.

Evasion, Escape and Survival: None.


ALBERT A. BUSCK
LTC, OrdC
Commanding

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Organizational Chart
QNABD After Action Rpts

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AVCA QN-GO-H (14 May 69) 1st Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report of the 184th Ordnance Battalion (Ammo) for
Period Ending 30 April 1969 (RCS CSFOR-65) (R-1)

DA, HEADQUARTERS, US Army Support Command, Qui Nhon, APO 96238 18 JUN 1969

TO: Commanding General, 1st Logistical Command, ATTN: AVCA GO-O, APO
96384

1. The Operational Report, Lessons Learned of the 184th Ordnance Battalion for the quarterly period ending 30 April 1969 has been reviewed by this headquarters and the following comments are submitted:

a. SECTION 2, paragraph a: Nonconcur if "decreasing the number of separate units" means inactivating a unit. Personnel shortages are command wide. By eliminating units, the 184th would only further reduce its authorization for and source of personnel and equipment, thus reducing the percentage of personnel fill in the remaining companies.

b. SECTION 2, paragraphs b and d: These lessons learned have already received comment from this headquarters, in the indorsements to the respective After Action Reports, Lessons Learned.

c. SECTION 2, paragraph c: Concur. Sapper training is conducted within this command for all personnel. Action by higher headquarters is required for such training to be given within CONUS to logistical personnel bound for RVN.

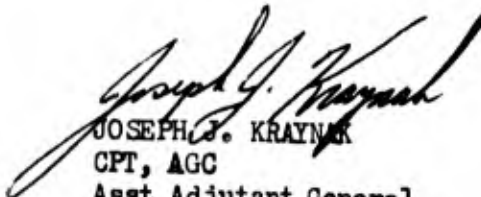
d. SECTION 2, paragraph e: Concur. Firetrucks were requested on a 180 day loan basis. However, the request was denied, since the equipment is not available in country. This headquarters continues to seek other avenues of approach for solving this problem. Resolution of this problem will require action by higher headquarters.

e. SECTION 3 (DA Survey information) was not required for this reporting period.

2. The report is considered adequate as modified by the above comments.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

TEL: QNL 2161


JOSEPH J. KRAYNAK
CPT, AGC
Asst Adjutant General

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AVCA GO-MH (14 May 69) 2nd Ind

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of the 184th Ordnance
Battalion (Ammo) for Period Ending 30 April 1969 RGS USFOR-65

DA, Headquarters, 1st Logistical Command, APO 96384 6 JUL 1969

TO: Commanding General, United States Army, Vietnam, ATTN: AVHOC-DST,
APO 96375

1. The Operational Report-Lessons Learned submitted by Headquarters, 184th Ordnance Battalion (Ammo) for the quarterly period ending 30 April 1969 is forwarded.

2. Pertinent comments follow:

a. Reference item concerning Critical Shortage of Personnel, page 6, paragraph 2a. Nonconcur. Decreasing the number of separate units would only cause a decrease in the authorized strength of the command and therefore cause a proportionate decrease in the number of replacements. As of 24 June 1969, USASUPCOM, Qui Nhon was at 93.9% of its authorized enlisted strength. However, in the 55 series MOS's, which is the predominant MOS in the 184th Ordnance Battalion, the support command is at 54.4% strength because of a command wide shortage in these MOS's.

b. Reference item concerning Sapper Tactics, page 6, paragraph 2c. Concur. To help this situation this Headquarters published 1st Log Comd Reg. 350-5, counter sapper training, on 9 June 1969.

c. Reference item concerning Firefighting Equipment, page 7, paragraph e(1). Concur that all authorized TO&E equipment should be on-hand for ordnance companies; however, nonconcur that fire trucks should be assigned to each unit. The problem of providing adequate fire protection to ammunition storage areas in the field was recently addressed by a survey of these facilities conducted by P&E as directed by USAECV. It is recognized that there is a country wide shortage of water trucks and the use of expedient or improvised methods is encouraged as a stop-gap measure until TO&E shortages are made up. This, as well as other measures recommended as a result of the above inspections will serve to upgrade ASP fire fighting capabilities and make appropriate equipment available. Action by forwarding headquarters is adequate.

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AVCA GO-MH (14 May 69) 2nd Ind

6 JUL 1969

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of the 184th Ordnance
Battalion (Ammo) for Period Ending 30 April 1969 RCS CSFOR-65

3. Concur with the basic report as modified by this and previous indorsement. The report is considered adequate.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

TEL: LBN 4639


C. D. STAFFORD
1st AGC
Asst Adjutant General

CF:
USASUPCM-QNH
184th Ord Bn

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AVHGC DST (14 May 1969) 3d Ind


SUBJECT: Operational Report of the 184th Ordnance Battalion (Ammo) for
Period Ending 30 April 1969 RCS CSFOR-65 (R-1)

HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96375 21 JUL 1969

TO: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-DT,
APO 96558

This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report-Lessons Learned
for the quarterly period ending 30 April 1969 from Headquarters, 184th
Ordnance Battalion (Ammo) and concurs with the report as indorsed.

FOR THE COMMANDER:


A. R. GUENTHER
CPT. AGC
ASST. ADJUTANT GENERAL

Cy furn:
184th Ord Bn
1st Log Comd

GPOP-DT (14 May 69) 4th Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report of HQ, 184th Ordnance Battalion
(Ammo) for Period Ending 30 April 1969, RCS
CSFOR-65 (R1)

HQ, US Army, Pacific, APO San Francisco 96558 6 AUG 69

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development,
Department of the Army, Washington, D. C. 20310

This headquarters has evaluated subject report and forwarding indorsements and concurs in the report as indorsed.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF:

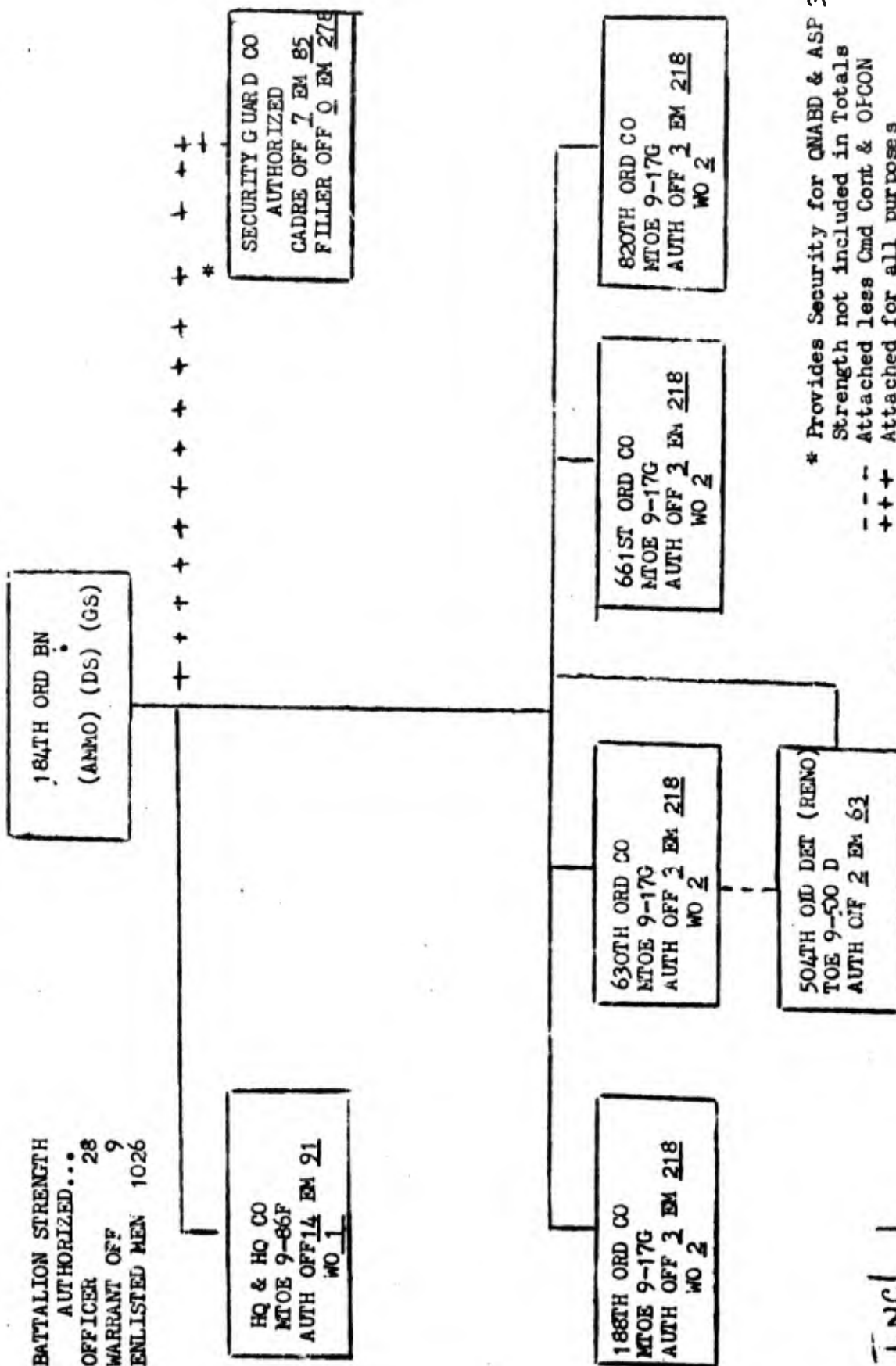


D. A. TUCKER
CTT. AGC
ASST AG

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ORGANIZATION

BATTALION STRENGTH
AUTHORIZED... 28
OFFICER 9
WARRANT OFF 1026
ENLISTED MEN



* Provides Security for QNABD & ASP 340
Strength not included in Totals
Attached less Cmd Cont & OFCON
Attached for all purposes

Final 1

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 184TH ORDNANCE BATTALION (AMMO)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96226

AVCA QN-OD-CO

9 April 1969

SUBJECT: Summary of Events: Attacks on Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot
23 February - 23 March 1969

THRU: Commanding General
US Army Support Command, Qui Nhon
ATTN: AVCA QN-GA
APO 96238

TO: Commanding General
1st Logistical Command
ATTN: AVCA-GA
APO 96384

1. Reference Phonecon between Major Michael, Materiel Officer, this headquarters, and Captain Hood, AVCA-GA, First Logistical Command, 4 April 1969.
2. During the period 23 February - 23 March 1969, the Ammunition Base Depot at Qui Nhon sustained three sapper attacks by an unknown size hostile force. The attacks were all detected by an explosion in the depot area and contact has never been made with a hostile force in the depot area. As a result of these attacks the 184th Ordnance Battalion (Ammo) received the following casualties: 3 Missing in Action and Presumed Dead; 48 Wounded as a result of Hostile Action. A total of 23 pads and one small arms area were destroyed and one pad was damaged in the three attacks.
3. On 23 February 1969, the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot was attacked by an unknown size enemy sapper unit. This unit infiltrated into the depot, set their charges on pads 92, 95 and 103 in the northeast area of the depot and left the depot without being detected. The three pads which were satchel charged contained 105mm HE rounds. The fire which resulted from the explosions flared up and rounds on the pads began cooking off within several minutes, before sufficient manpower and firefighting equipment could be brought to effectively fight the fires. The major efforts of personnel in the area were to search the pads in the immediate area, rescue the security personnel from the perimeter towers and fight fires which were spreading from the burning pads to adjacent pads. As the fires became more intense the firefighting personnel were ordered to withdraw to the western area of the depot. The personnel who were sweeping the pads and the security reaction force were then withdrawn and a perimeter was established inside the depot, a short distance from the burning pads. The area of the ammunition fire was entered continually throughout the night, even though additional pads had begun to burn and detonate and the fragmentation was intense, in attempts to determine if firefighting efforts could be effectively taken without excessive hazards or what other

14

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AVCA ON-OD-00

9 April 1969

SUBJECT: Summary of Events: Attacks on Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot
23 February - 23 March 1969

courses of action could be taken. The ammunition fire which resulted from the initial three explosions destroyed sixteen pads and one small arms area within sixteen hours. Hot 105mm HE rounds were still smoldering and detonating in certain areas as late as ten days after the initial explosions. The disregard for personal safety in their efforts to rescue wounded and stranded personnel, fighting the violent ammunition fires and continually entering an area of excessive danger to determine what action could be taken earned the following awards for members of this command: 12 Bronze Star Medals with "V" Device; 17 Army Commendation Medals with "V" Device; 18 Army Commendation Medals; 5 Certificates of Achievements; and 3 Purple Hearts. These awards were presented by Major General Joseph M. Heiser Jr. on 1 March 1969.

4. On 10 March 1969 the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot was attacked a second time by a sapper unit. The unit entered the depot in the northeastern area of the perimeter, placed satchel charges on three pads and left the depot area without being detected. The first explosion was on Pad 89 which contained 105mm illumination rounds. Approximately eight people arrived at the pad within 60-90 seconds after the explosion. These people equipped with axes, 5 gallon hand pump water fire extinguishers exhibited extraordinary courage and were able to successfully contain the fire. A water truck arrived approximately three minutes later and the fire on this pad was completely extinguished within ten minutes. At approximately the same time that the fire was put out on pad 89, pads 28 and 90 exploded in quick succession. These pads both began burning violently and before personnel could get close enough to fight the fires, the rounds on the pads began detonating. Pad 23 contained 81mm HE mortar ammunition and pad 90 contained 2.75 inch rockets. The security and ordnance personnel began searching the pads in the immediate areas around these pads and all non essential personnel were ordered to evacuate the depot area. A satchel charge was found on pad 29. It was thrown over the back berm of the pad where it detonated a few seconds later. Within a few minutes after the non essential personnel had been ordered to evacuate the depot, pad 28 mass detonated. The fireball from this mass detonation was from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet high and contained 81mm rounds which were scattered over the entire western area of the depot, many detonated in the air or upon impact. Due to the violence of the detonations at pad 28 and the possibility that other pads might be detonated by the rounds being blown off pad 28 a decision was reached to evacuate the depot area and secure the surrounding area to prevent personnel from being trapped in the depot if the ammunition fires spread. The violence of the explosions subsided at approximately 0400 hours and the essential security and ordnance personnel entered the depot area. Sometime during the night pads 68, 83 and 84 were ignited by hot fragmentation from pads 23 and 90. At approximately 0600 the depot was again evacuated as pad 68 was observed burning violently. Pad 68 contained 8 inch HE projectiles. At 0700 hours pad 68 mass detonated. The blast from this detonation seemed to have extinguished the fires which had been burning in the depot area. As in the first attack the personnel of this command ignored normal considerations for their personal safety and placed themselves in extremely hazardous situations in order to attempt to contain the fires, rescue wounded and stranded personnel and to enter hazardous areas to evaluate and determine what actions could be taken to best fight the raging ammunition fires. For their valorous efforts these personnel have been recommended for appropriate awards.

15

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9 April 1969

SUBJECT: Summary of Events: Attacks on Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot
23 February - 23 March 1969

The following is a summary of the awards recommended for this action: 18 Bronze Star Medals with "V" Device; 35 Army Commendation Medals with "V" Device; 3 Army Commendation Medals and 8 Purple Hearts.

5. On 23 March 1969 a sapper unit again entered the depot and placed satchel charges on pads 76 and 64. When the explosion and resultant fire was reported the ordnance personnel in the immediate area were able to reach the fire on pad 76 and contain the blaze until a water truck arrived. The fire was extinguished within approximately ten minutes after the explosion occurred. Upon extinguishing the fire on pad 76, the personnel dispersed to search the pads in the immediate area. Approximately three minutes after the fire had been extinguished, a satchel charge went off on pad 64, mass detonating the pad. This pad contained 155mm HE projectiles. As there were a large number of personnel in the area searching pads, a large number of casualties resulted from this detonation. Three personnel who were last seen in the vicinity of this pad are missing and presumed dead. Thirty-four other personnel in the area sustained minor fragmentation wounds and ear injuries. The heat of the blast or hot fragments reignited pad 76 and rounds on pad 76 began detonating almost immediately. Priority was given to searching the remaining pads in the immediate area, removing hot fragmentation and rounds from the adjacent pads and evacuating the wounded. Many wounded personnel were evacuated from an area within fifty meters of pads 64 and 76 and several personnel were taken off pad 76 by personnel from this battalion even though there were fires and rounds detonating throughout the entire area. Because of the large number of fires and detonations and the heavy smoke it was believed that as many as five pads had been destroyed. However, when the intensity of the fires and detonations subsided the search teams returned to the area and found that all pads were intact except for the two pads originally reported. A large number of personnel in this battalion entered and returned to the areas around these pads to evacuate wounded, search pads, and evaluate the situation so a course of action could be determined. These actions were considered necessary and were made with complete disregard for personal safety by members of this battalion. Appropriate decorations have been recommended for personnel who continually exposed themselves to the hazards of fragmentation and possible mass detonations to evacuate wounded or contain the fires. The following awards have been recommended for personnel involved in this action: 14 Bronze Star Medals with "V" Device; 4 Bronze Star Medals; 20 Army Commendation Medals with "V" Device; 7 Army Commendation Medals; 29 Certificates of Achievement; and 37 Purple Hearts.

Albert A. Busck
ALBERT A. BUSCK
LTC, OrdC
Commanding

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ATTACK ON QUI NHON AMMUNITION BASE DEPOT 23 February 1969

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE: To review and describe the events of 23-24 February 1969 concerning the initial explosions and subsequent ammunition fires in the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot and allied operations in the immediate area.

2. INTELLIGENCE:

a. Terrain: The Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot is located in Valley "F", Phu Thanh, Republic of Vietnam. It is located at the northern base of Cu Mong Pass and is surrounded on four sides by higher ground.

(1) To the north there is a natural avenue of approach with a low ridgeline and dense vegetation.

(2) To the east there is a high ridgeline with extremely dense vegetation. On top of the ridgeline there are several trails but there are no streams or other sources of water resupply.

(3) To the south is Cu Mong Pass which is protected by 7th Company 2nd Battalion, 26th Regiment, ROKA Capitol Division (Tiger).

(4) To the west are high hills with extremely dense vegetation, numerous valleys, well used trails and sufficient streams to provide a resupply of water.

b. The following intelligence information was available to this headquarters on 22 February 1969.

(1) Patrols conducted by Delta Company, 58th Infantry on 22 January 1969 in grid blocks CR 0015 and CR 0016 revealed numerous huts and well worn trails indicating recent enemy activity in this area.

(2) ROK intelligence sources reported that no contact was made in two recent operations in the Vung Chau Mountain area although traces of enemy activity in this area were evident.

(3) At 1530 hours 9 February 1969 a work detail from the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot saw a Vietnamese dressed in black pajamas approximately 50 meters from the perimeter wire in vicinity CR 035168. The Vietnamese fled to the southeast upon being challenged. A search of the area revealed an observation post and a bunker.

(4) The Delta Company, 58th Infantry liaison with a ROK Tiger Division Company at Cu Mong Pass reported that ROK observation posts had observed 6 - 7 Vietnamese carrying individual weapons moving north in grid square CR 0613 in the afternoon of 17 February 1969.

(5) A reconnaissance patrol in grid blocks CR 0115 and CR 0116 on 18 and 19 February 1969 from Delta Company, 58th Infantry reported no evidence could be found of recent enemy activity in this area.

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(6) A ROK Tiger Division Special Forces Recon Company was conducting operations in the hills west of the Ammunition Base Depot on 22 - 23 February 1969.

(7) The National Liberation Front and North Vietnamese self imposed truce had ended at 0700 hours, 22 February 1969.

(8) At approximately 2300 hours all personnel in the depot to include all sentinels in the guard towers were informed that the Qui Nhon area was on yellow alert status and that the ARVN ASP was expected to be hit.

3. BACKGROUND TO ATTACK:

a. The 29 guard towers located in the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot were all fully manned on the evening of 22 February 1969.

b. Between 2200 hours 22 February 1969 and the time of the initial explosions the following personnel inspected the perimeter and guard towers:

(1) LTC Albert A. Busck, Commanding Officer, 184th Ordnance Battalion.

(2) MAJ Bobby R. Michael, Materiel Officer, 184th Ordnance Battalion.

(3) CPT Paul J. Borque, Operations Officer, 184th Ordnance Battalion.

(4) CPT Joseph E. Carter, Commanding Officer, Guard Command (Prov), 184th Ordnance Battalion.

(5) SSM Allen W. Davis, Sergeant Major, 184th Ordnance Battalion.

c. During guard mount all personnel had been reminded of the possibility of an enemy attack during the post-Tet period.

d. A work crew from the 820th Ordnance Company (Ammo) was working on pad 99 at the time of the initial explosions.

4. SUMMARY OF EVENTS:

a. At approximately 0220 hours 23 February 1969 an explosion was observed at pad 92, Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot. The explosion was in the direct center of the front or east side of the pad. The pallets of ammunition began to burn immediately.

b. Within three minutes after the initial explosion on pad 92, similar explosions were observed on pads 95 and 103. Fires also began to burn on these pads immediately. At the time of these explosions, CPT Bourque and CPT Carter were directly in front of pad 95. They described the explosion on pad 95 as being V shaped and having a large amount of red hot shrapnel or sparks. The explosion was on the south end of the pad between the ammunition stack and the berm.

c. The work crew on pad 99 proceeded to the generator located between pads 95 and 103.

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d. Major Michael observed what appeared to be a man go over the berm on the east side of pad 97. He called to CPT Carter to search for the man.

e. Within five minutes from the initial explosion the security reaction force and all other available personnel began to move to the burning pads. Upon arrival of these personnel the security force began a systematic search of the area to attempt to find the sappers which were believed to be in the area. The ordnance personnel began to search the pads for satchel charges and to attempt to extinguish the fires. As the pads were cleared a guard was posted on each pad. The search was eventually extended to include the entire depot area but had negative results.

f. At approximately 0235 hours rounds in pad 92 began cooking off followed by the rounds in pads 95 and 103. The shrapnel from these pads hindered the search and fire-fighting operations in the immediate area. All three pads contained 105mm ammunition.

g. The water trucks which are maintained in the depot at night for a fire-fighting mission were all moved to the area but could not approach the pads due to the explosions. The other water trucks organic to the 184th Ordnance Battalion which are maintained in the cantonment area, as well as Delta Company, 84th Engineer Battalion's water truck, were moved to the depot.

h. The fragmentation from pads 92, 95 and 103 ignited pads 93, 96 and a portion of small arms area B. Three dozers were sent to the small arms area to attempt to extinguish the fire by covering it with dirt. As the dozers were approaching the small arms, pad 85 began to burn. An attempt was made to put out the fire on pad 85 with water but this was unsuccessful. As the fire became more intense the rounds began to cook off. The fragmentation from this pad made attempts to extinguish the fire in the small arms area too hazardous.

i. Due to the intense heat and danger from fragmentation all personnel were ordered to withdraw from the area at approximately 0325 hours. The water trucks, bulldozers, and other fire-fighting equipment were positioned in the areas around the exploding pads so that they could be readily available to fight fires on any pads which would be ignited by the fragmentation.

j. The guards in the towers in the northeast corner of the depot were extracted by personnel from Provisional Guard Command. Additional guards were positioned between the towers in all other parts of the depot to provide against enemy infiltration through the explosion area.

k. At 0500 hours three enlisted personnel were medevaced for shrapnel wounds and one warrant officer was medevaced at 0515 with a suspected heart attack.

l. By 0830 hours, although the fire was still burning it appeared that no additional pads would be ignited as the intensity of the explosions had diminished. However, a reconnaissance of the area by air revealed that a small fire was burning on one pallet in pad 91. By 0845 hours pads 91 and 99 were burning and within another 15 minutes rounds on these pads had begun to cook off. No attempt could be made to extinguish these fires due to the fragmentation from the other burning pads.

Page 3 19

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m. At approximately 0945 hours pad 65 burst into flames, pads 98 and 94 were ignited by fragmentation from other pads between 0945 and 1130 hours. These pads began burning and cooking off within 30 minutes.

n. At approximately 1530 hours explosions were observed on pads 101, 102 and 97 in rapid succession. These explosions occurred four hours after pad 94 and after it appeared that the fire would not spread. Personnel in the depot reported these rounds as incoming and some guards in the towers reported spotting smoke in the hills to the east of the ABD. At the same time personnel from Delta Company, 58th Infantry also reported spotting the smoke. Gunships were requested from Lane Army Airfield and they arrived over target within the minutes. Two gunships strafed and rocketed the suspected firing positions, no return fire or secondary explosions reported.

o. A total of 16 pads and one small arms area was destroyed within sixteen hours. A complete listing of items lost by DODIC and dollar value has been forwarded through Class V channels.

p. At 1700 hours 23 February 1969 the 2nd Battalion (-) 26th Regiment, ROK Capitol Division (Tiger) began an operation in the area west of the Ammunition Base Depot. This operation lasted 3 days during which time there was no enemy contact although evidence was found which indicated that 10-12 Viet Cong had recently been in this area for several days.

q. On 25 February, 5th Maintenance Battalion was attacked by a squad (10-12 men) size VC unit. The attack consisted of automatic weapon fire, B40 rockets with one satchel charge captured.

5. ANALYSIS OF EVENTS:

a. At approximately 0220 hours 23 February 1969 three separate explosions ignited fires on three pads in the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot. The fact that no muzzle flashes or sounds of weapons firing were reported and that all the explosions were on pads strongly suggests that the explosions were set off by sappers. The search of the depot failed to reveal any traces of sapper activity and there were very few reports of individuals being sighted.

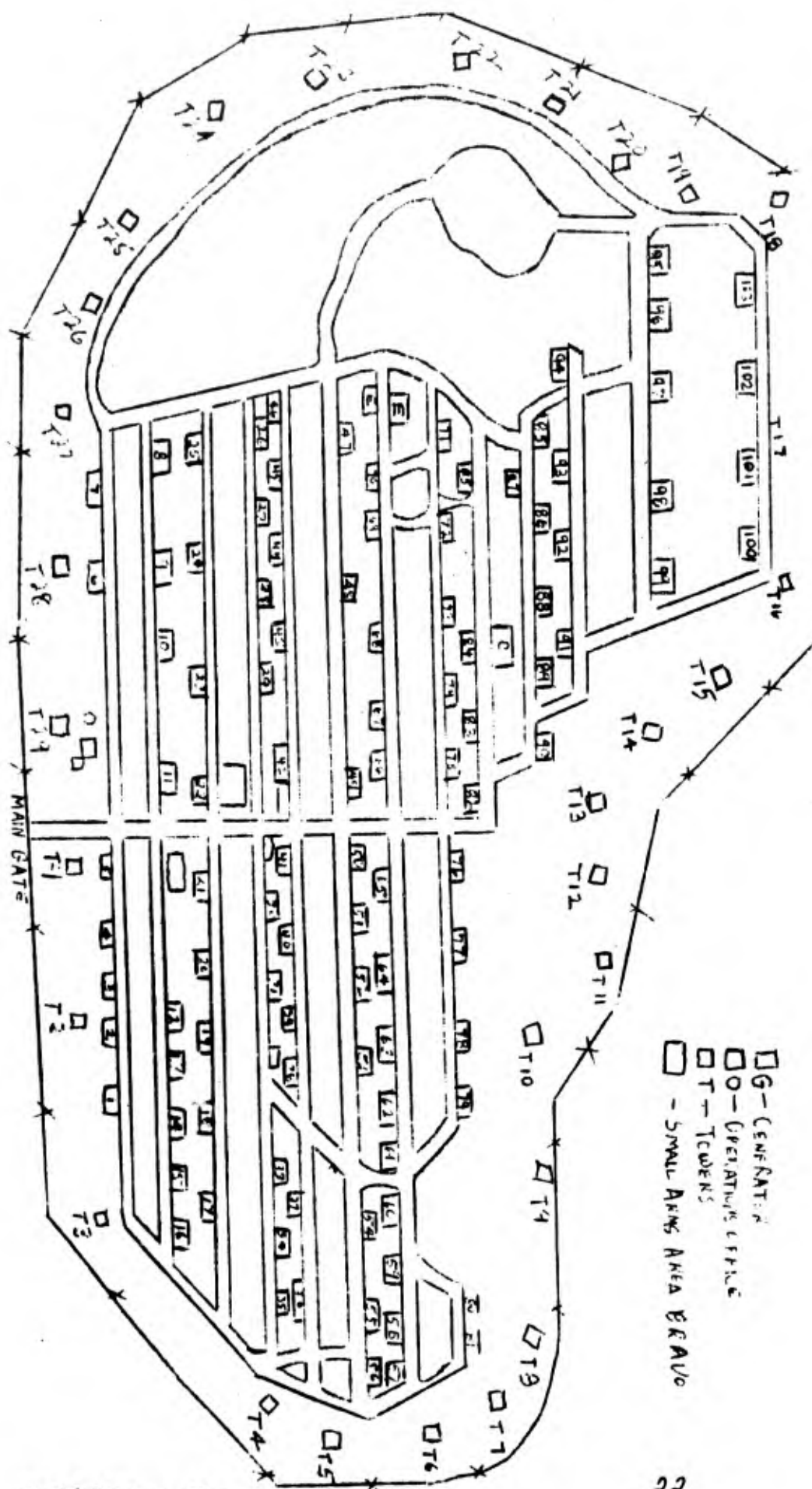
b. At approximately 0830 explosions on pads 91 and 99 set off fires on these pads. Although low order detonations had been occurring since the initial five pads were set off it appeared just prior to these explosions that the fires had diminished and that no additional pads would be ignited. A burning round had been seen in a small fire on pad 91 at approximately this time.

c. Pads 97, 102 and 103 were ignited by explosions at approximately 1530 hours. At this time the density of explosions had again diminished. Personnel in the depot reported incoming rounds at this time, however the explosions in the depot area could have been caused by rounds being thrown from burning pads and detonating on impact or cooking off after landing. Security personnel in the depot towers reported spotting smoke on the hillside east of the ABD. At the same time personnel from Delta Company, 58th Infantry reported spotting smoke in the same area from the cantonment area. White phosphorous rockets from pad 85 had been cooking off and this smoke spotted on the hill could have been one of these rounds.

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6. CONCLUSION: Although the actual cause of the initial explosions cannot be positively identified, it appears from the evidence and testimony available and a knowledge of enemy forces and tactics used in the Qui Nhon area, that these explosions were the work of a sapper unit. This unit was able to infiltrate into the depot, set their charges and escape undetected. It is also extremely possible that the enemy realizing his opportunity, used a firing position on the east side of the depot to fire mortar, rocket or recoilless rifle fire into the explosion area to set off additional pads during the daylight hours of 23 February 1969.

Appendix 1
Depot Map



APPENDIX #1

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ATTACK ON QUI NHON AMMUNITION BASE DEPOT 10 March 1969

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE: To review the events of 10 and 11 March 1969 concerning the initial explosions and subsequent ammunition fire in the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot and allied operations in the immediate area.

2. INTELLIGENCE:

a. Terrain: The Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot is located in Valley "F", Phu Thanh, Republic of Vietnam. It is located at the northern base of Cu Mong Pass and is surrounded on four sides by higher ground.

(1) To the east there is a high ridgeline with extremely dense vegetation. On top of the ridgeline there are several trails but there is no source of water resupply.

(2) To the south is Cu Mong Pass which is protected by 7th Company, 2nd Battalion, 26th Regiment, ROKA Capitol Division (Tiger).

(3) To the west there are high hills with extremely dense vegetation, numerous valleys, well used trails and sufficient streams to provide a source of water resupply.

(4) To the north there is a natural avenue of approach with a low ridgeline, dense vegetation and a stream that flows from the ABD, through the village of Phu Tai into Bac Ho Lac.

b. The following intelligence information was available to this headquarters on 10 March 1969.

(1) Patrols conducted by Delta Company, 58th Infantry on 22 January 1969, in grid squares CR 0015 and CR 0016 revealed numerous huts and well worn trails indicating recent enemy activity in this area.

(2) ROKA intelligence sources reported that no contact was made in two operations conducted on Vung Chau and Ka Sien Mountains although traces of enemy activity in the area were evident. These operations were conducted in early February 1969.

(3) At 1530 hours, 9 February 1969, a work detail from the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot saw a Vietnamese dressed in black pajamas approximately 50 meters from the perimeter wire in vicinity of CR 035186. The Vietnamese fled to the southwest upon being challenged. A search of the area revealed an observation post and a bunker.

(4) The Delta Company, 58th Infantry liaison with the ROKA company at Cu Mong Pass reported that several ROKA observation posts had observed 6-7 Vietnamese carrying individual weapons moving north in grid square CR 0613 in the afternoon of 17 February 1969.

(5) A reconnaissance patrol from Delta Company, 58th Infantry in the area CR 0115 and CR 0116 reported that no evidence of recent enemy activity in this area had been found.

Incl 4

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(6) A ROKA Special Forces Reconnaissance Company conducted a series of patrols from 23-29 February 1969 in the area west of the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot. There was no report of any enemy contact made by these patrols.

(7) At approximately 0220 hours, 23 February 1969 the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot suffered what appeared to have been a mortar and/or sapper attack. Negative enemy contact was made at this time.

(8) 2nd Battalion (-), 26th Regiment, ROKA Capitol Division (Tiger) conducted an operation in the area immediately east of the ABD from 23 to 28 February 1969. Results of this operation revealed traces of recent movement by squad size elements of VC but no actual contact was made.

(9) On 28 February a defoliation helicopter working for the ABD spotted what appeared to be fortifications at CR 043176 as he was leaving for Lane Army Air Field to refuel. When he returned to the ABD the Security Officer for the depot went in the copter to look at the suspected fortifications. This officer estimated that the fortifications was base camp for a company size unit. Air support was requested to lift and withdraw a patrol at 1200 hours, 1 March or 0730 hours 2 March 1969. This request was not filled due to an unusually heavy commitment of air resources to ROKA forces who had just initiated a large operation.

(10) On 5 March 1969, a reconnaissance patrol from a ROKA Special Forces Company reported sighting 25 VC in vicinity of CR 0016. Two tactical air strikes were called into this area. No VC were reported as being killed but two weapons were found by a ROKA Special Forces patrol when they went into the area on 6 March 1969. These patrols ended on 6 March 1969 but artillery H&I into this area was conducted from 6-10 March.

(11) At 2230 hours, 5 March 1969 a fire mission was requested by either gunships or artillery on the suspected enemy positions at CR 043176. This request was denied. At approximately 0045 hours, 6 March 1969 artillery fire was again requested as movement had been detected in that general vicinity. This request was approved and at 0125 hours a fire mission was conducted. Results: Unknown.

(12) On 7 March 1969, a reconnaissance patrol from Delta Company, 58th Infantry conducted a patrol along the Dat Vo Stream and the trails in vicinity of CR 0118 and CR 0119. No enemy contact or evidence of recent enemy activity was reported.

(13) A ROKA Special Forces Company was conducting reconnaissance patrols in the vicinity CR 023168- CR 007182 at the time of the attack on the depot. This operation had originally been scheduled to terminate on 15 March 1969. This patrol expanded their area of operations after the attack on the depot to reconnoiter for enemy activity to the east and southwest of the depot.

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3. SUMMARY OF EVENTS:

a. 10 March 1969:

(1) At 2250 hours an explosion was observed at Pad 89 in the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot. This explosion immediately ignited ammunition pallets on the pad. Within two to three minutes personnel who had been working in the vicinity of the pad began to fight the fire. A water truck from the 820th Ordnance Company Operations Office arrived at the pad within five minutes and was used to assist in extinguishing the fire.

(2) At 2300 hours Defense Sub-Sector B-3 was placed on a YELLOW Alert status.

(3) At approximately 2308 hours the security reaction force and all ordnance depot personnel began to search the depot area in an attempt to find any satchel charges which might have been placed on a pad as well as attempting to locate any sapper personnel who remained in the depot area.

(4) At approximately 2315 hours the fire on pad 89 was extinguished.

(5) At approximately 2320 hours an explosion was heard from the vicinity of pad 28. It was soon confirmed that pad 28 was burning and immediately detonations began on this pad.

(6) At approximately 2345 hours a satchel charge was found on pad 29. This charge was thrown over the east berm by a non commissioned officer. It was reported by witnesses that this charge exploded within a few seconds after it landed.

(7) At approximately 2330 hours Major Michael, Depot Commander, ordered all vehicles loaded with ammunition to evacuate the depot area due to the excessive amount of hot shrapnel and rounds being thrown from pad 28. Many rounds were exploding on impact or cooking off shortly after. After approximately ten minutes all non-essential personnel were ordered to leave the depot area and proceed to the brass yard, CR017170.

(8) At approximately 2335 hours an explosion was observed on pad 90. The pad started burning immediately and went high order very soon thereafter. Although the pad had been searched twice with negative results it appears that a sapper was responsible for this explosion as there was no debris from other pads being thrown into this area.

(9) At 2345 hours a high order mass detonation of pad 28 occurred. This detonation scattered 81mm HE mortar rounds throughout the entire depot area, heavily damaging all structures in the depot area. At 2346 hours Major Michael ordered all personnel to evacuate the depot area as the danger from shrapnel and rounds being thrown from the pads and exploding on impact was too hazardous to risk unnecessary exposure of a large number of personnel. The security guards were the last personnel to leave the depot area. Upon their departure they formed a defensive perimeter on the north, west and south sides of the depot.

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(10) Sometime between 2335 hours and 2400 hours pads 68, 83 and 84 were set off by rockets from pad 90 and began burning.

b. 11 March 1969:

(1) At 0110 hours, several explosions in the depot were interpreted as incoming rocket fire and an air strike was requested at coordinates CR 040168.

(2) At 0113 hours, approval of the request for an air strike was received. At 0117 hours, the gunships were reported to be in the air and approaching the Ammunition Base Depot.

(3) At 0125 hours, the density of rockets landing in the depot area and exploding suggested that these explosions were caused by rockets being blown from pad 90 and exploding on impact and were not incoming rounds. The gunships were requested to maintain a holding pattern over the area to the west of the depot. The flareship which accompanied the gunships provided illumination for the area southwest of the depot.

(4) At 0157 hours, the 8th Transportation Group S-3 called to inquire if an artillery fire mission could be utilized. CPT Carter and Major Michael requested that a mission be conducted in the area CR 043175 - CR 143178.

(5) As of 0210 hours, the following pads were confirmed as having been damaged in the attack: 28, 89, and 90.

(6) At 0221 hours, confirmation of the artillery fire mission was received. The fire plan called for several rounds to be fired at fifteen minute intervals commencing at 0230 hours.

(7) At 0258 hours, the artillery fire was lifted as a helicopter was being sent to the area so that an aerial observation could be made to determine the actual status of fires in the depot area.

(8) At approximately 0400 hours personnel from the security force and the EOD personnel began to move back into the depot area. All pads were again checked for satchel charges.

(9) At 0310 hours the cantonment area had been placed on a modified GREY Alert status which consisted of two guards in each tower, two guards in a central bunker between each tower and a walking guard in each company area.

(10) At 0517 hours pad 68 began to burn violently.

(11) At 0520 hours all southbound traffic was held at the cantonment area main gate as fragments were again beginning to be thrown onto Highway 1.

(12) At 0530 hours the depot was again cleared of all personnel. The security force withdrew to their defensive positions at 0555 hours. As the security force was deploying around the depot they received small arms fire from the southwest. Helicopter gunships were again requested.

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(14) At 0555 hours the gunships and flareships were again overhead. The flareship provided illumination until it was required to assist in the gunships fire mission.

(15) At 0603 hours the gunships began a fire mission with a target at CR 039158. This fire mission was terminated at 0623 hours at which time the helicopters returned to Lane Army Air Field. Results: Unknown.

(16) At 0705 hours pad 68 exploded in a high order mass detonation. The blast from this explosion extinguished several fires in the depot area.

(17) At 0730 hours personnel returned to the depot area.

(18) At 1015 hours a cut through the interior fence was found by CPT Paul Bourque and CPT William Holmes. This cut was through the bottom of three rolls of concertina which had been installed in the previous week. The location of this cut is between pads 92 and 93 on the northern slope of a stream bed, approximately 5 meters from a culvert.

(19) The ROKA Special Forces Reconnaissance Company which had been conducting an operation northwest of the depot expanded their original area of operations to assist in the defense of the depot. Ambush patrols have been set in grid square 0218, along the stream and trails which are the best avenue of approach available to hostile forces attacking the depot.

4. ANALYSIS OF EVENTS:

a. At 2258 hours, 10 March 1969, an explosion was observed on pad 89 in the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot. This explosion resulted from a satchel charge which had been placed on the east side of the pad between the middle and bottom pallets of a stack of three pallets. From the manner in which the pad immediately burst into flames it is assumed that the satchel charge was composed of an extremely combustible material.

b. The fire on pad 89 was reached almost immediately by personnel with water fire extinguishers and within several minutes by a water truck from the 820th Ordnance Company Operations Office. These personnel were able to contain and extinguish the fire within 20 minutes due to the availability of proper equipment and their proximity to the pad at the time of the explosion.

c. At 2320 hours, 10 March 1969, an explosion started a fire on pad 28. It is assumed that the satchel charge which initiated this explosion was of the same type which was used on pad 89 as a violent fire erupted on this pad. Rounds started cooking off almost immediately. The detonations on this pad prevented personnel from approaching to fight the fire.

d. As pad 28 began to detonate several non commissioned officers searching pad 29 found a satchel charge on top of a pallet. SFC Watts, 661st Ordnance Company, threw the charge over the east berm of the pad where witnesses said it exploded seconds after it landed. This satchel charge is described as being composed of a plastic type explosive with a blasting cap and time fuse. No trace of this charge has been found so its composition cannot be definitely determined.

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e. At approximately 2330 hours an explosion was observed on pad 90 by personnel who were departing pad 89. Although this pad had been searched twice and the security force was in the area there is no manner in which this explosion could have been started other than a sapper setting a satchel charge. There was no pad burning at this time which was throwing rounds into the area near pad 90.

f. Five pads were destroyed and one pad was damaged during the attack. A complete listing of items lost by DODIG and dollar value was forwarded through Class V supply channels. In addition to ammunition losses a large amount of equipment was lost due to the suddenness and violence of the initial high order mass detonation.

g. At sometime between 2345 hours and 0300 hours, pads 68, 83 and 84 were ignited by hot fragments or exploding rockets from pad 90.

h. From the evidence available it appears that the sappers entered the Ammunition Base Depot at a point between pads 92 and 93, traveled through the stream beds and drainage ditches to the vicinity of pads 28 and 89.

5. CONCLUSION: From the evidence and statements available it is evident that the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot was attacked by a sapper unit at approximately 2300 hours, 10 March 1969. The sapper unit was able to penetrate the depot perimeter in the northeastern area of the depot, set their satchel charges on pads 89, 28 and 90, and escape from the depot without suffering any known casualties. It is extremely possible that this unit was the same sapper unit which attacked the Ammunition Base Depot on 23 February 1969.

6. OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED:

a. Situation: The water truck from the 820th Ordnance Company Operations Office arrived at pad 89 within a few minutes after the fire started. This truck was able to provide a steady high pressure stream of water.

Observation: The availability of this truck was instrumental in extinguishing the fire on pad 89. The use of this type of vehicle to provide a steady stream of water to fight an ammunition fire is better than using either hand held fire extinguishers or foam fire trucks.

Recommendation: That the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot be provided sufficient water trucks so that they can be placed at strategic points in the depot area to be readily available and able to reach any location in the minimum time possible.

b. Situation: The personnel on pad 89 who were fighting the fire were equipped with banding cutters, axes, shovels and crowbars.

Observation: The fire on pad 89 was extinguished largely due to the fact that personnel were able to break the ammunition pallets and disperse the burning wood on the berm, reducing the intensity of the fire.

Recommendation: That all vehicles which are assigned to personnel who work in the depot area and all water trucks be required to carry an axe, crowbar and shovel.

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c. Situation: After the first mass detonation all personnel were ordered to evacuate the depot area and proceed to the brass yard.

Observation: Due to the confusion that resulted after the first mass detonation and the immediate evacuation, there was an unnecessary delay in accounting for the personnel from the various units.

Recommendation: That all units plan on the contingency that the depot will have to be evacuated at some future date and make provisions to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Maintain an accurate roster of all personnel working in the depot area, particularly during the hours of darkness.
2. Select an area along Highway 1 or in the brass yard to use as an assembly area or checkpoint.
3. Appoint one NCO and an alternate to set up and control the predesignated checkpoint and account for all personnel upon order to evacuate the depot.

d. Situation: Pad 28 mass detonated and caused the evacuation of the depot area. This pad was throwing fragments and exploding rounds in all directions.

Observation: The main road and main gate area in the depot were receiving an excessive amount of fragments and rounds were exploding throughout this area. All personnel in the depot area had to pass through this area in order to evacuate the depot.

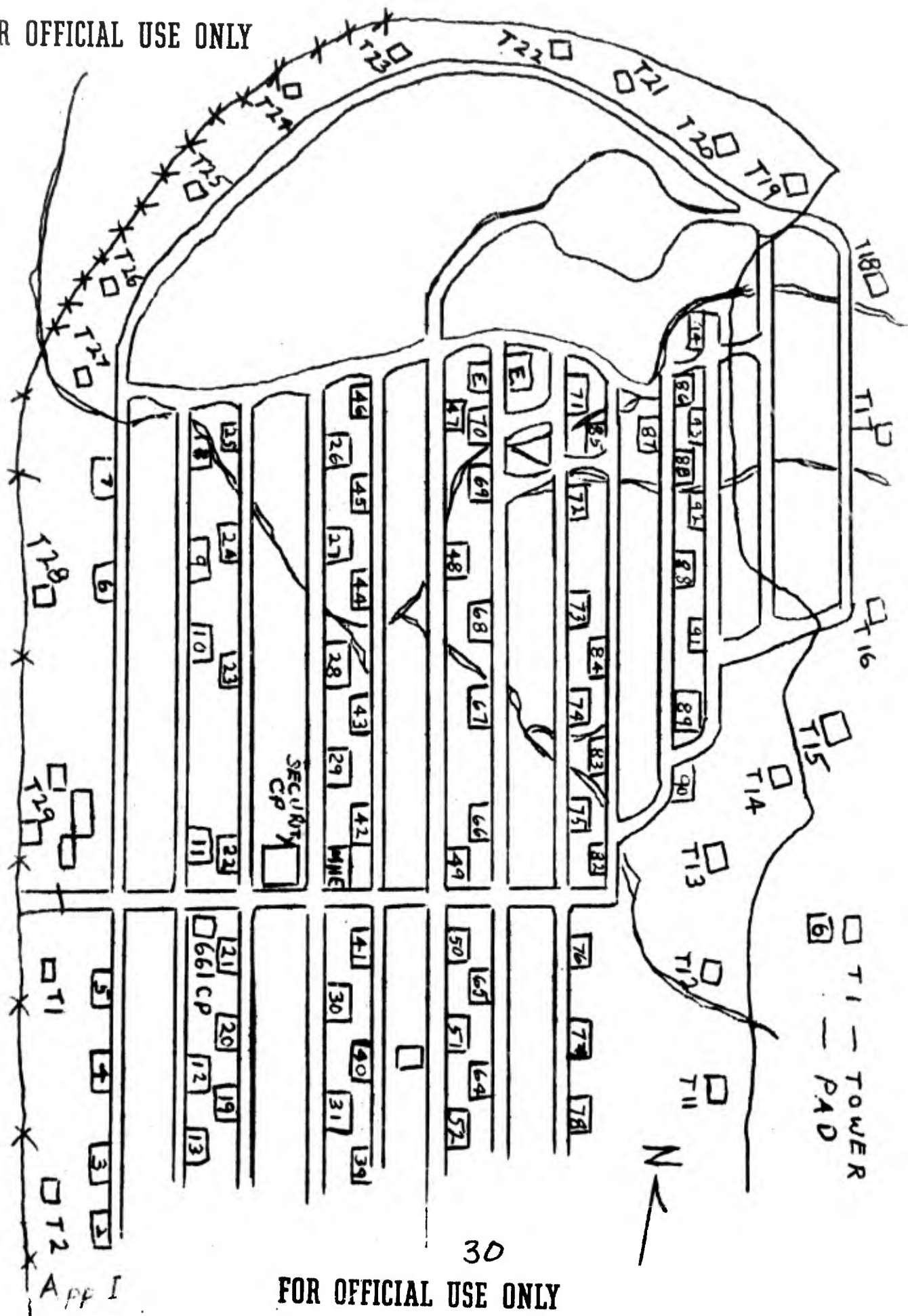
Recommendation: That an alternate gate be constructed providing access to Highway 1 at a distance from the existing gate. This gate should be constructed so that it can be locked, trip flared and equipped with concertina barriers, yet easily opened when required.

e. Situation: The order to evacuate the depot was given at approximately 2345 hours but was not received by some personnel until at least 15 minutes later.

Observation: Due to the violence and proximity of the first mass detonation to the operations offices and security command posts, the normal lines of communications were disrupted. For this reason the order to evacuate was not immediately passed to all personnel.

Recommendation: That a system of audio and visual signals be devised and disseminated to be used in the event of fire, attack, or evacuation. An audio and visual system would be devised utilizing sirens and flares that would supplement the normal communications channels to insure the rapid dissemination of emergency information.

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ATTACK ON QUI NHON AMMUNITION BASE DEPOT 23 March 1969

1. PURPOSE: To review the events of 23 and 24 March 1969 concerning the initial explosions and subsequent ammunition fires in the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot.

2. INTELLIGENCE:

a. Terrains: The Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot is located in Valley "F", Phu Thanh, Republic of Vietnam. It is located at the northern base of Cu Mong Pass and is surrounded on four sides by higher ground.

(1) To the east there is a high ridgeline with extremely dense vegetation. On top of the ridgeline there are several trails but there is no source of water resupply.

(2) To the south is Cu Mong Pass which is protected by 7th Company, 2nd Battalion, 26th Regiment, ROKA Capitol Division (Tiger).

(3) To the west there are high hills with extremely dense vegetation, numerous valleys, well used trails and sufficient streams to provide a source of water resupply.

(4) To the north there is a natural avenue of approach with a low ridge-line, dense vegetation and a stream that flows from the ABD, through the village of Phu Tai into Bac Ho Lac.

b. The following intelligence was available to this headquarters on 23 March 1969.

(1) At approximately 2300 hours, 10 March 1969, the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot was attacked by a sapper squad. The damage to the depot in this attack was five pads destroyed and one pad damaged. Negative contact was made with hostile forces at this time.

(2) For intelligence prior to the attack 10 March 1969, see letter AVCA QN-OD-B, dated 19 March 1969, subject: After Action Report; Attack on Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot.

(3) A ROKA Special Forces Company was conducting operations in the area west of the QNABD on 10 March 1969.

(4) After the attack on 10 March 1969, liaison meetings with ROKA, ARVN and US Army personnel were conducted to discuss alteration of tactical areas of operation so that a tactical unit would be responsible for the areas east and west of the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot and therefore have free access to these areas.

(5) The ROKA Special Forces Company operating in the area west of the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot expanded their operations and began reconnaissance in the area north and east of the depot.

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(6) During the period 10 thru 23 March 1969 ambushes were conducted in grid squares CR 0116, CR 0215, CR 0218, CR 0315, and CR 0416 on an average of four per night.

(7) A Special Forces Team from the ROKA Special Forces Company established a bivouac area in the retrograde brass yard located at CR 016170 and operated in an area west of QL 1. They conducted day reconnaissance patrols on trails in this area.

(8) On 20 March 1969 at 0500 hours the entire area around the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot with the exception of the 10 meters on both sides of QL 1 was declared off limits to all personnel except authorized military personnel.

3. BACKGROUND TO ACTION:

a. On the night of 23 March 1969, thirty-seven towers were manned.

b. On the night of 23 March 1969 there were seven friendly patrols in the area around the depot. Delta Company, 58th Infantry had one patrol in the north, the ROKA Tiger Division Reconnaissance Company had two patrols to the southeast and the ROKA Special Forces had four ambush locations in the area west of the depot.

c. On 22 March 1969 a platoon of Delta Company, 58th Infantry began a two day operation with an ambush position at CR 038169. On 23 March 1969 this platoon moved north and at approximately 1830 hours set up an ambush at vicinity of CR 023187.

(1) At approximately 2030 hours the southern observation post of this ambush reported movement along the trail to the south.

(2) At 2100 hours the ambush opened fire on four Viet Cong who were in their kill zone. Two were killed, one seriously wounded but able to strip off his equipment and crawl away. The fourth escaped to a position in front of the southern observation post where six others had been waiting. (NOTE: On 26 March 1969, 8th Company, 26th Regiment ROKA Tiger Division discovered a third body 50 meters from the ambush site).

(3) At 2130 the patrol leader reported that he could hear movement to his south and that his observation post was reporting that he could hear individuals moving south toward the QNABD as well as movement to the east and north.

d. At approximately 2140 hours, LTC Busck, Depot Commander, ordered that the depot ordnance mission be halted and that all available personnel proceed to the northeastern area of the depot.

e. At 2145 hours a reserve force was called for from the Provisional Guard Command to further strengthen the perimeter in the northeastern area of the depot.

f. At approximately 2200 hours it was reported that all the dog patrols had been posted.

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4. SUMMARY OF EVENTS: (For location of pads see Inclosure 1)

a. At approximately 2300 hours an explosion was observed on a pad in the vicinity of Tower 12. A fire on the pad started immediately.

b. Several individuals proceeded to this area immediately. They verify that pad 76 was burning. This group led by Captain Paul J. Bourque and SFC John Lynch were able to extinguish the fire within seven to ten minutes.

c. At approximately 2310 hours pad 64 mass detonated. There had been no fire or other explosion on this pad prior to this mass detonation. At the time of the explosion at least two individuals were searching this pad. Captain Keith C. Manley went past this pad 60-90 seconds prior to the explosion and observed a $\frac{1}{2}$ ton vehicle on the pad but saw no indication of a fire.

d. The heat and blast from the mass detonation on pad 64 started pad 76 burning again. Pad 76 immediately began cooking off. The immediate area was evacuated by all personnel.

e. The heat and blast from the detonation on pad 64 blew down the 820th Ordnance Company's Operations Office and ignited the generator located between pads 64 and 76, which cut off the lights in the area indicated at Inclosure 1.

f. At approximately 2315 hours the first dustoff ships were requested. These copters arrived over the battalion pad at approximately 2330 hours but refused to land after they received fire on their initial approach. At approximately 2335 hours the wounded personnel began to arrive at the helipad.

g. At approximately 2320 hours the Depot Commander ordered that all personnel who were non essential to the security of the depot to evacuate the depot area. At this time all Han Jin and 8th Transportation Group personnel proceeded from the depot, north on QL 1.

h. At approximately 2230 hours 5th Maintenance Battalion had been receiving small arms fire from 100 meters north of the intersection of QL 1 and Long My Road. As a result QL 1 was closed north of the Long My Road intersection.

i. As no traffic was allowed to proceed past 5th Maintenance Battalion, the influx of vehicles from the ABD started backing up at the Camp Humber Main Gate and blocked the entrance to the Cantonment Area helipad for a short period of time. At 2400 hours there were 70 vehicles parked along QL 1. Although the majority of these vehicles were empty there were numerous vehicles loaded with ammunition.

j. At approximately 0400 hours 24 March pad 76 was still exploding and the fires in the area caused personnel investigating the area to believe that pads 77 and 78 were burning.

k. By 0600 hours personnel had proceeded to pad 78 and were able to determine that pads 77 and 78 were not affected by the fire and it was confirmed that only pads 76 and 64 had been lost.

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1. At 0830 hours 24 March a hole in the wire was found in a gully to the right of Tower 12.

5. ANALYSIS OF EVENTS:

a. At 2100 hours an ambush patrol from Delta Company, 58th Infantry made contact with 10 Viet Cong who were moving north. The VC killed were carrying approximately 600 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, 4 B-40 Rocket Warheads and mortars, 6 Stick Type Grenades, corn and potatoes, but no individual weapons. From the amount and type of ammunition and supplies captured it appears that this unit was infiltrating into the Phu Tai area and was not directly associated with the attack on the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot. This patrol reported during their debriefing that there was a large amount of movement by hostile forces other than those they engaged in this area.

b. At 2305 hours an explosion started a fire on pad 76. From the description and results of the explosion it appears that this explosion was caused by a satchel charge similar to the type previously employed in the QNABD.

c. Between 2310 and 2315 hours, pad 64 mass detonated. At this time there were no fires in the depot area and personnel from the 184th Ordnance Battalion were on all pads in that vicinity searching for satchel charges or sappers. The cause of this detonation cannot be definitely determined but the evidence available indicates that a satchel charge with a timed fuse was placed on the pad in such a manner as to cause a mass detonation of the ammunition.

d. The mass detonation of pad 64 was responsible for the majority of the casualties and damage which occurred during this attack.

(1) Of the 3 missing personnel, two are believed to have been located on pad 64 when it exploded and the other is believed to have been on pad 76.

(2) Of the 32 wounded the majority sustained concussion or ear injuries.

(3) Four $\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks, one water truck, one $2\frac{1}{2}$ ton truck, one 100 KW Generator and the 820th Ordnance Company's Operation Office were destroyed.

6. CONCLUSION: That at approximately 2200 hours, 23 March 1969, a Viet Cong sapper unit entered the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot at a point 15 meters southeast of Tower 12, moved through the stream bed at that location to pad 76 then across to pad 64, set satchel charges on these pads with time fuses, and then left the depot at approximately the same time that pad 76 first exploded.

7. OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED:

a. Situation: At approximately 2325 hours all non essential personnel and vehicles were ordered to be evacuated from the depot area. There were about 70 vehicles which left the depot area. The majority of these vehicles were Han Jin trucks which attempted to proceed to the Han Jin area in Phu Tai or the Qui Nhon port facility. Due to the fact that QL 1 was closed north of the intersection of QL 1 and Long My Road these vehicles were halted at the Camp Humber Main Gate. The trucks were parked along the road south from the Cantonment Area.

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main gate for approximately 1 mile. The helipad which is directly east of the cantonment area main gate was used for medevac operations.

Observation: The large number of vehicles on the side of the road, especially those vehicles loaded with ammunition were excellent targets for small arms and B-40 rocket attacks. The congestion and confusion at the main gate hindered the arrangements to handle and initial handling of wounded personnel arriving for medivac.

Recommendation: That an area be designated to be used to park vehicles off QL 1 where protection can be provided for the drivers and vehicles. Such an area could be to the northwest of the depot, across from the retrograde brass yard. This area would be leveled off, with at least two access roads to QL 1 and have bunkers and revetments available for use by drivers and to protect the vehicles.

b. Situation: Two and possibly three personnel from this unit were searching a Class VII pad when this pad mass detonated. This pad was located in close proximity to the first pad which had started to burn. In the past, when the depot has been attacked the pads in the immediate area were always thoroughly searched and there were numerous personnel in the area for this purpose.

Observation: After pad 76 exploded and the fire started there was approximately a ten minute delay before the next explosion occurred on pad 64. No Viet Cong were spotted in this area by anyone in the area. The explosion on pad 64 was a high order mass detonation. It is extremely possible that Viet Cong who have observed the reaction of this battalion to previous pad explosions, planned this ten minute delay so that a large number of casualties could be inflicted.

Recommendation: That Class VII pads not be entered or approached until a reasonable delay after the initial explosion and in no instance should a Class VII pad be approached when the ammunition on the pad is burning.

c. Situation: An explosion on pad 76 immediately started a fire. This fire was reached within two to three minutes by both personnel with axes and other hand tools and the water truck from the 820th Ordnance Company (Ammo).

Observation: That the availability of this water truck was instrumental in extinguishing this fire.

Recommendation: That water trucks be provided to this battalion to be placed at strategic locations so that they can be readily available when required.

d. Situation: Immediately after the initial explosion all pads in the surrounding area were thoroughly soaked with water to lessen the possibility that they would be ignited by burning debris or hot fragments. This water is available only from organic water trucks of the battalion.

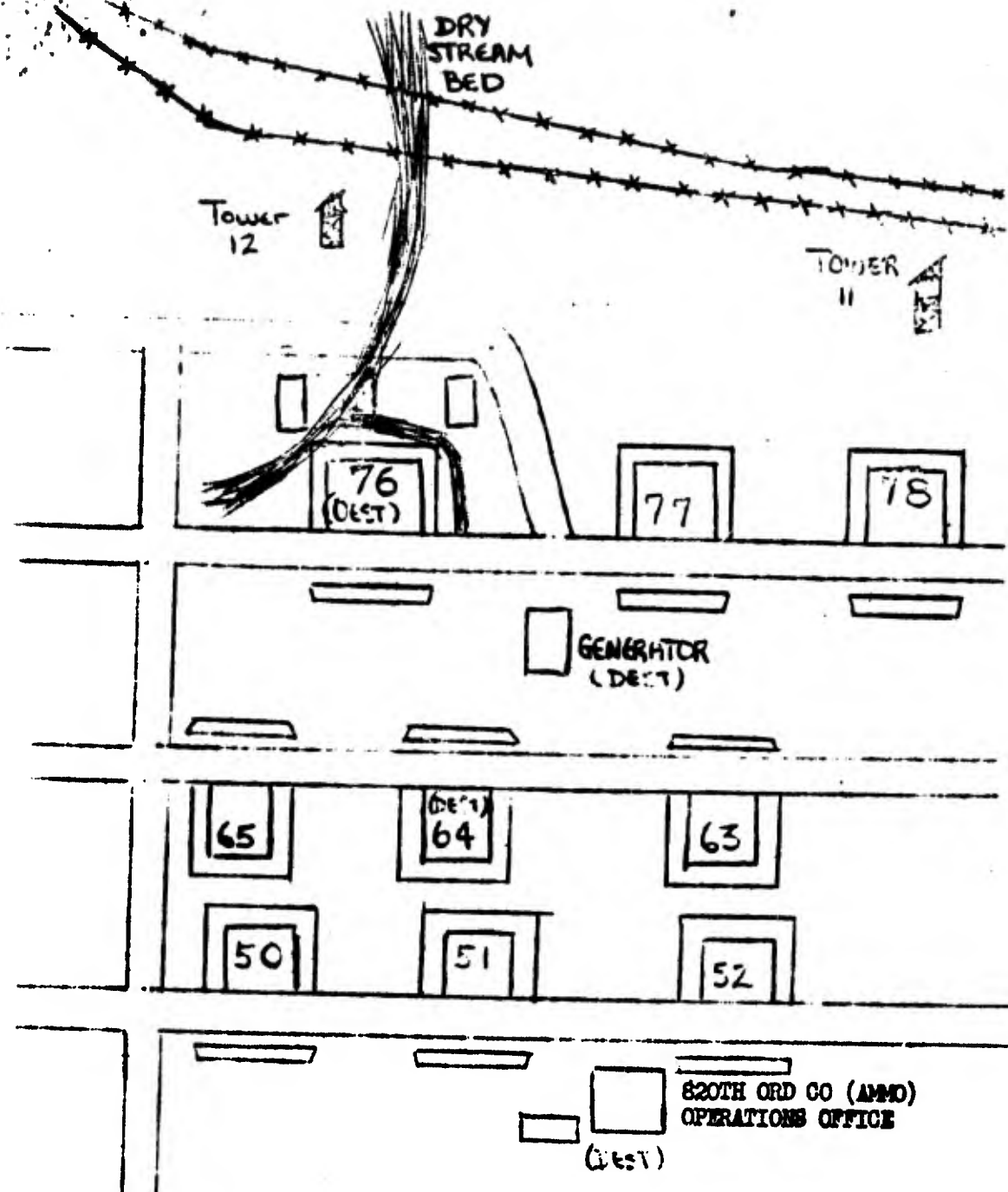
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Observation: In order to thoroughly soak these pads, a large amount of water is required. To get a sufficient amount of water, the available trucks must be refilled. At the present time the only location where these trucks can be refilled is at the Phu Thanh water point, a distance 8 or 9 miles. The trip to the water point requires at least an hour and a half. This delay is being offset at the present time by the use of water trailers from 8th Transportation Group, but these trailers do not usually arrive for an hour after the explosions.

Recommendation: That the water point which was located across from the main entrance to the Qui Nhon Ammunition Base Depot be reopened, so all water trucks could be rapidly refilled.

1 Appendix
Area Overlay

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APPENDIX 1 to AFTER ACTION REPORT; ATTACK ON QUARD 23 MARCH 1969

37

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